



The State of New Hampshire
Department of Environmental Services



Michael P. Nolin
Commissioner

January 5, 2006

The Honorable Norman L. Major, Chairman
Ways and Means Committee
Room 202, LOB
Concord, NH 03301

RE: House Bill 1418, Relative to Road Toll Refunds

Dear Representative Major:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on HB 1418 which would authorize the payment of road toll refunds to the navigation safety fund, or the lake restoration and preservation fund upon the request of an applicant. The Department of Environmental Services (DES) supports this legislation.

Exotic aquatic plants plague nearly 65 lakes, ponds and rivers throughout the state of New Hampshire. The primary mode of spreading these plants from lake to lake and within a lake is from boating activities. These invasive plants can reach lengths of 15 feet in the water column and out-compete the natural aquatic plants. The plants form thick and impenetrable mats in infested waterbodies, limiting public recreation like swimming and boating and making these popular activities dangerous. Exotic aquatic plants negatively impact the aquatic ecology, stunting fish growth and creating an unpleasant fishing experience. Recent studies show a reduction in property values in lakes infested with exotic aquatic plants. Although there are no feasible means of eradicating these plants, New Hampshire biologists have incorporated a series of management practices that have been extremely successful in controlling these noxious weeds.

DES has initiated many proactive programs that are designed to lessen the potential for the spread of these plants and to control exotic aquatic plants within infested waterbodies. Exotic aquatic plant prevention and research programs and exotic aquatic plant control through integrated management requires an annual funding source.

In recent years, DES has not been able to meet all the grant requests from lake associations and municipalities to control exotic aquatic plant infestations. In an effort to provide some funding to those who apply for control grants, DES often provides less than 50% of the control costs, shifting the burden of the cost to the entity (generally a lake association or a municipality). Other innovative prevention programs like Weed Watchers and Lake Hosts may also suffer as program popularity leads to an increase in participation and competition for available funding. Increased funding derived from voluntary donations of road toll refunds will benefit the state's efforts to increase participation in these important prevention and research programs and provide additional funds to help lake associations and municipalities control the growth of these problematic plants.

Thank you again for the opportunity to comment in support of this important legislation. If you have any questions or need additional information, please do not hesitate to call Jody Connor at 271-3414 or me at 271-3449.

Sincerely,


Michael P. Nolin
Commissioner

cc: Representative Dick Drisko
DES Exotic Species Program